

EmergingEdTech's 2012 Free Education Technology Resources eBook

Overviews and introductions to dozens and dozens of free web-based technologies, and many ways to use them in the classroom.



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EmergingEdTech.com is owned and operated by Kelly Walsh



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Introduction

This digital booklet is intended to provide an introduction, and easy access, to many of the wonderful free applications and resources available on the Internet for teachers to use in and out of the classroom as part of the instructional and administrative process. This is the 2012 update of this eBook (the 2011 edition was the first). We've added a lot of new content, including chapters focused on iPad apps, using Facebook in Education, Free Productivity Resources, and more. We've also added quite a few new articles to various chapters throughout the booklet, and removed some older material. Lastly, we combed over all the links to make sure all the resources are still available, and made changes where needed.

The majority of content in this ebook consists of reformatted articles originally published as blog posts on EmergingEdTech.com (some articles are here in nearly their original format and others in much more abbreviated format, with links to source article, to keep this from becoming too lengthy). After most chapters, a section of links to additional related articles is provided.

I hope you find some great, fun, and productive tools here. Please feel free to share these resources with your colleagues, and to come and participate in the dialogue out on EmergingEdTech.com! – K. Walsh

EmergingEdTech is a blog and website focused on the use of Internet and other instructional technologies and how they can be used to engage students and enhance learning outcomes. Every week we write and publish three blog posts that look at many different types of education technologies and ways in which educators, administrators, and students can use them in and out of the classroom.

Please stop by [EmergingEdTech.com](http://www.emergingedtech.com) today and take advantage of the wealth of free resources and materials available there. We also have a very active presence on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, so feel free to use these social media applications to tap into these valuable and informative resources as well!

- Check us out on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/EmergingEdTech>
- Visit the EmergingEdTech YouTube Channel:
<http://www.youtube.com/user/EmergingEdTech>
- Or Follow Us on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/EmergingEdTech>

Thank you for learning about today's and tomorrow's education technologies with EmergingEdTech.com!

Chapter 1 - Blogs & Blogging Resources

Subscribing to Blogs

For those not already familiar with this, there are two common ways to subscribe to a blog.

- Email: Some blogs allow users to subscribe by simply entering their email address (and then confirming a validating email message sent to them).
- RSS: Another common technique for subscribing to a blog is to subscribe to an RSS Feed. An RSS Feed directs the blog, or a summary and link to it, to a special place where you can go and view it (as opposed to having it go to your crowded email In Box). This link provides information you need to learn how to do this:
http://email.about.com/cs/rss/a/rss_spam_free.htm.

While it may take a little investment in time to learn about this for first timers, once you are familiar with it you can easily use the process to subscribe to other blogs.

Creating your own education related Blog

There are many websites on the Internet where educators can write their own blogs. One way to do this is to become part of an organization that provides its members a place to blog, such as [Educause](#), or [Classroom 2.0](#). Another way to write your own blog is to set yourself up on one of the many sites that are designed to allow you to create your own domain or subdomain, where the content is entirely yours. While this may sound a little daunting to newbies, it really isn't too hard to get started. Below I have listed two such sites, both of which are free, and are very widely used.

[Edublogs.org](#) – This is a very popular blogging tool used by thousands of educators to create and host teacher and student blogs. It is easy to use, has a great deal of available functionality, and there are plenty of resources available to help you learn about using the tool.

[Blogger.com](#) – This is an extremely popular free blogging site that is also easy to use. Any “blogspot.com” blogs you come across were created here.

These brief tutorial videos introduce readers to how easy it is to use Blogger and Edublogs to start your own blog:

- **Starting A Blog On Edublogs:**
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Flk653lvkk>
- **How to create a blog with Blogger:**
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOhW1mXM1yQ>

A more thorough introduction to blogging in education today

In 2010, I did a series of five articles in which I examined blogging in education, grouped into five categories: Teacher's Blogs, Classroom Blogs, Student Blogs, Administrator's Blogs and Educational Technologist's Blogs.

Here are links to each of the articles in the series:

- [Blogging In Education Today \(a multipart series\)](#)
- [Blogging in Education Today, part 2 \(Teacher Blogging\)](#)
- [Blogging in Education Today, part 3 \(Student Blogging\)](#)
- [Blogging in Education Today, part 4 \(Administrator's Blogs\)](#)
- [Blogging in Education Today, part 5 \(Education Technology Blogs\)](#)

Chapter 2 - Collaboration & Brainstorming Tools

I'll start by mentioning that many tools, including such varied apps as [wikis](#), [project management](#), and [interactive whiteboards](#), are often used collaboratively, so there's our first set of collaboration apps (*we won't examine these further here – feel free to click on the links to learn more about them*).

What other kinds of applications lend themselves well to collaboration in instructional environments? Since collaboration is a broad concept, this could lead us down many paths. For purposes of brevity I will stick with a small, focused set of tool types to investigate further. We will narrow our focus specifically to these tool sets: **Idea/Mind Mapping tools**, **Collaborative Documents**, and **Workgroup tools**.

Mind Mapping & Idea Mapping Tools

This first set of tools lend themselves readily to brainstorming and other collaborative efforts. There are dozens of applications on the Internet that fall into this group. Here are a few tools I have frequently come across mention of on sites focused on the use of internet technologies in education: Bubble.us, Mindmeister.com, and Mindmapper.com.

[Bubbl.us](#) (note that this is spelled correctly – there is no “e”)

This free tool allows users to easily create bubble maps, which can be exported in various formats, saved (by exporting and reimporting them in an appropriate format), and edited collaboratively. I found it very easy to use. There was no apparent “help” tool, but I found some helpful information available at [blog.bubbl.us](#). Included there was this explanation from Ben Davis about how Bubble.us helped his students to network, “Typically I have trouble getting them to get excited about word webs. However, they were VERY excited about doing this. The guys loved how the bubbles exploded when you deleted them, and the girls loved the colors. However, the thing they seemed most interested in was the fact that they could network.”

[Mindmeister.com](#)

Mindmeister appears to provide similar functionality to Bubbl.us, for a fee. A free 30 day trial is provided, and for academic users there is a highly reduced fee, and a custom subdomain can be licensed. Mindmeister has received a number of awards.

“Demogirl.com” has made [this brief \(3 minute\) video](#) available to provide some quick insight into this application.

[Mindmapper.com](#)

This is another application that charges, but also provides a free trial, and a reduced fee for academic use. This is an impressive looking site, with an array of offerings, support, FAQs, and much more. The product comes in Professional, Standard, and Academic

versions, as well as MindMapper Jr. for kids. There is a Feature Comparison chart to help users determine which product offering might be best for them. Frankly, it looked like a pretty significant investment in time was necessary just to understand the various versions of the product and what they had to offer, but at the same time, it appeared that this site may meet more sophisticated requirements than the simpler sites mentioned above. A “deeper dive” may be warranted in a future posting.

If you want to try this category of software out, you can hardly go wrong with Bubbl.us. If it's feature set isn't rich enough, you can trial one of the other tools above. **To investigate this category of application even further, Wikipedia's [list of mind mapping software](#) is a great resource.**

Collaborative Documents

[Google Docs](#) has become very popular, and [Zoho Office Suite](#) is a great alternative to the Google offering.



Google Docs (docs.google.com)

You must create a Google Account in order to use Google Docs, but once that is done, sharing and collaboratively editing documents is very easy. Google Docs offers word processing documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and forms (which appear to actually be for surveys). Naturally, the use of each of these tools differs in various ways from other tools (such as the ubiquitous Microsoft Office), but it is not too hard to learn the different command sets. Advanced functions can be tougher to figure out, or may simply not be available. There is extensive help available at <http://docs.google.com/support/>.

The collaboration process is simple: invite another user to collaboratively edit a document by sending them an email using the “Share” function. The invited user will get an email, and will also see the shared document in their Google Documents menu, and can simply open it and edit along with the original user. I imagine it might get rather confusing if a lot of users were editing a document at the same time, but in my test the process was quite manageable, as one user's changes quickly showed up in the other user's copy of the document. There is a revision history maintained automatically.

Zoho Office Suite (www.zoho.com)

As with Google Docs, I tested the Zoho Office Suite by creating a couple accounts, starting a new document (in Zoho Writer), inviting someone (my second account) to collaborate on the document, and then edited the document as both users. The process

was straightforward. As with Google, a revision history is provided, but (unlike Google) one has to be in 'locked' mode (not sharing the document) in order to access it.

Using the different Zoho apps could take some learning, and each Zoho application has an FAQ page (under the Help menu) that provides links to extensive tutorial information. For example, [here is the FAQ page for Zoho Writer](#). In addition to their free service for individuals, Zoho also offers a Business edition for free for up to 10 users, which provides email with "your personalized domain based email id", as well as "other features and functionalities that are specifically designed to address the needs of an organization."

Both Google Docs and the Zoho Office Suite look to be highly functional environments for collaboration, and each also offers a wide array of additional application tools. The bottom line is that they are both solid apps and you're really not going to go wrong with either one of them.

Workgroup Tools

I wrote about [Edmodo.com](#) in the 2011 edition of this eBook and labeled it a "Workgroup Tools", but it is just as well described as a Social Networking tool for education, and it also contains much of the functionality offered in some CMS/LMS apps.

Edmodo.com



Edmodo positions itself as a "private communication platform built for teachers and students". When I first checked it out in 2010, I signed up for an account, and had my 8th grade son sign up, and we spent some time trying the application out. I came away feeling good about the application's potential for instructional use. Its education-specific orientation, and group-focused approach position it as a uniquely suited application for educational use, and it is very much worth checking out. The site has evolved considerably since then, and has around 5 millions of users as of early 2012.

Room21

[Room 21](#) is a “21st Century Social Learning Platform”. John Zoccola from [Superstar Learning](#) (Room 21's parent company), wrote to me explaining that educators, “are using a new social learning and achievement platform called Room21. It is a Facebook-like environment designed for peer collaboration and to create Learning Communities online.” The site is free and allows all members of the learning community - students, parents, teachers, and administrators, to become engaged in the process.

Access these EmergingEdTech.com posts to explore Collaboration & Brainstorming further:

[Google Docs: Why Teachers and Students Should Be Using Them For Course Work](#)

[6 Free Online Interactive White Boards](#)

[Microsoft's Live@edu versus Google Apps for Education](#)

[Google Apps for Education vs Microsoft's Live@edu](#)

Chapter 3 - Educational Games & Other Fun Tools

The Internet is ripe with free games that can be helpful to teachers and students alike. Of course, there's also a lot of junk out there, and sites that will burden your computer with viruses and the like, so it helps to have a vetted list to work from. Below I provide a listing of 10 free educational game sites that were all good quality sites at the time I did the original article in late 2009, and hopefully will stay that way for years to come.

10 Free Educational Game Sites

IN 2009, I searched out and visited a bunch of sites with free educational games and selected the ten I thought were most useful and appropriate to education. In addition to a brief overview of each site, I have also attempted to define the grade range that each site is applicable to. Most of the sites listed here are geared towards K-12 (with many leaning towards K-6 or so), but some do have fun games that will challenge the Higher Ed student and adults as well. Take one for a spin today!

[Funbrain](#) (Grades K through 8): This popular site from Pearson Education features 'Arcades' specific to Math and Reading, along with the 'Classic Funbrain' games such as Math Baseball and Grammer Gorillas. Funbrain also has resources specifically for teachers, organized on this [Teacher's home page](#).

[Discovery.com's Games](#) (Grades 3 and up): Dozens of activities, organized into 4 categories: Games, Quizzes, Puzzles, and Interactives. This is a high quality site, and it was recommended by several instructors in my children's classes. I enjoyed trying out some of these games, and the site is part of the overall Discovery.com site, which is rich with informative and fun content.

[Sheppard Software](#) (All Ages): This site provides a wealth of free games, puzzles, quizzes, and more. An impressive, rich resource of fun educational games and activities. No registration required. I have to say that I personally enjoyed this site quite a bit, partaking in quizzes, completing puzzles, and checking out the many resources there.

[FunSchool](#) (pre-K through Grade 6): If you go to the Parents & Teachers section on this site, the games are grouped by Preschool, Kindergarten & 1st Grade, 2nd & 3rd, and 4th and 5th. The site offers more than 300 interactive games and activities that are fun and easy to use. Activities include matching numbers and shapes for preschoolers and geography, math and history for third through sixth graders.

[National Geographic Channel's Games Site](#) (Grades 3 and up): This site features a variety of games and interactives and leans towards various science and history based adventures and activities, rather than the traditional subjects-specific types of games on

many other sites. There's a lot of cool stuff here, like Fossil Hunts, Journey to the Edge, Rhino Rescue, Monster Fish of the Congo, Earth in Balance, and How Taboo are You?

PrimaryGames (Grades K through 6): Lots of fun games here, covering common subjects like Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and more.

Educational Games (and Simulations) on NobelPrize.org (Grades 6 and up + Higher Ed): As stated on the site, "These games and simulations, based on Nobel Prize-awarded achievements, will teach and inspire you while you're having FUN!" This is one of the more high end sites in terms of the level of content. Challenging fun for middle school students, high schoolers, college students, and adults.

Prongo (pre-K through middle school): The games here are divided by age level (3-6, 6-9, 9-12). This is a fun site with a dozen or more games in each category.

Childtopia (pre-K to 6): This site has versions in 5 languages, and 9 categories of activities, including Games, Learn to Draw, Listen and Reading Comprehension, Learn to Draw the Numbers, and so on. It appears to be predominantly Spanish based on the ads that surround the playing area. There is a premium version that eliminates ads and provides a full screen interface for just \$12/year.

7 Free Online Educational Game Sites

In summer of 2011, my son Dylan went out and found and 7 more sites for a new post and some new fun resources, and here they are:

Most of these sites offer games that are appropriate for K through 6, with a few offering some games applicable to students in grades 7 and higher (*Thanks to my son Dylan for his help putting this list together.*)

Knowledge Adventure (<http://www.knowledgeadventure.com/>)

"Knowledge Adventure has been making educational games for kids for over two decades. Working with child experts, developmental psychologists and educators, it produces games loved by parents and children alike. The fun educational games created by Knowledge Adventure have won many awards, including the iParenting Media Award, the Toy Man Award of Excellence and the National Parenting Seal of Approval, to name a few. Here is Knowledge Adventure's collection of one hundred fun, free online educational games for kids."

Learning Games For Kids (<http://www.learninggamesforkids.com>)

"Educational games are a great tool for building foundation math and language skills that today's elementary school curriculum requires. These online learning games and songs for kids are fun, teach important skills for preschool and elementary school kids and

they're free. Want educational games that help build skills in math, language, science, social studies, and more? You've come to the right place!"

Multiplication.com (<http://multiplication.com>)

"This site contains the techniques, tips, and secrets used by master teachers!"

Play Kids Games (<http://www.playkidsgames.com>)

"Play Kids Games provides free online kids games that are both fun and educational. Aimed at ages pre-K through middle school, Play Kids Games offers kids a safe environment to discover their abilities and learn new skills with interactive and fun computer games."

Hooda Math (<http://hoodamath.com/games>)

This site contains math games organized into three sections: Geometry Games, Arithmetic Games, and Logic Games. The Hooda site also contains a variety of additional resources for math teachers and students.

4Kids.org (<http://www.4kids.org/games>)

"Take a break from your homework and kick back with these fun games from Arcademic Skill Builders! Click a game button below to play." Site contains many games, grouped into these categories: Language Arts, Addition and Subtraction, Multiplication & Division, Fractions and Ratio Games, Angels & Coordinates, and 'Fun Stuff'.

Math Playground (<http://www.mathplayground.com>)

"Welcome to Math Playground, an action-packed site for elementary and middle school students. Practice your math skills, play a logic game and have some fun!"

PowerPoint Jeopardy in the Classroom

This is a great way to have some fun and reinforce learning in the classroom (or at home!). In the 2011 eBook, we had a link to one Jeopardy game using PowerPoint, but as of Aug 2011, that template link wasn't working any longer, so I dug up a few others:

Here's a few replacements to try out - some are blank, some are pre-filled:

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/jeopardy-game-TC030004943.aspx>

<http://elainefitzgerald.com/Jopardy1Template.ppt> (this directly loads a Powerpoint file)

<http://jc-schools.net/tutorials/PPT-games/Jopardy.ppt> (this directly loads a Powerpoint file)

http://www.hardin.k12.ky.us/res_tech/countyjeopardygames.htm

Hope one or more of these works well for you!

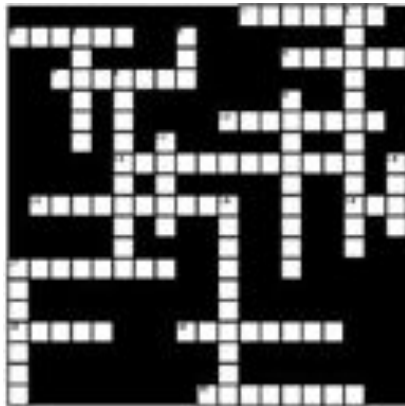
It takes some time to come up with 50 answers and enter them in a template, but the result (playing the game!) can be a lot of fun. It's easy to envision this being useful and fun in a classroom setting, for students old enough to be comfortable with the "answer and question" format (probably grades 4 – 12+).

Some considerations to keep in mind:

- Be a little creative about breaking out of the three-player structure, to let everyone enjoy the fun, or create small groups to create and play their own games.
- Plan how you will simulate the "buzzer" - that is, how you will decide which player gets to respond to each clue first (*we went with the first to put up their hand after the question was asked, but there was a fair amount of squabbling over who was first each time, and whether someone put up their hand before the question was finished, etc.*).
- Presenting this through a projector would be nice, or on an Interactive Whiteboard.
- Be sure to have a Final Jeopardy question prepared (there is no template for this).

Fun tool for the classroom – simple Crossword Puzzle maker

This is a fun little tool I came across.



This tool will allow you to create a simple crossword puzzle by plugging in a bunch of words and clues. The result isn't exactly NY Times worthy, but it works, and you might find this to be a fun tool to create a topic-specific crossword for your students, or to let them create one.

Create your own simple Crossword Puzzle at:
<http://www.armoredpenguin.com/crossword/>

Access these EmergingEdTech.com posts to explore Educational Games further:

[12 Great Resources To Help Keep Student's Math Skills Sharp Over The Summer](#)

[7 Free Online Educational Game Sites \(Help Kids Keep School Skills Sharp During Summer\)](#)

[Five Fun Free iPad Apps for Elementary School Teachers And Students](#)

[5 Fun Free iPad Math Game Apps](#)

Chapter 4 - Educational Videos, Lectures, and Podcasts

A Dozen Great Free Online Video Lecture Sites

A collection of web sites with thousands of free video lectures and related course materials, including many offerings from major universities.



There are thousands of video-taped course lectures, and many other more complete course offerings, available for free on the Internet today. The quality and quantity of these offerings is growing and improving daily.

How educators and students choose to leverage these types of resources is also evolving. As stated on the [Opencast Project](#) web site, “openly accessible course videos help draw attention to a professor’s work, they can keep alumni engaged and informed, and students often supplement their studies with the material.” It should be interesting to see how members of the academic community choose to use this type of resource, in and out of the classroom, in coming years.

General Video Lecture Sites

All of the sites have directories and search tools to facilitate finding content you may desire. Of course, some overlap in these offerings (that is, the same videos on multiple sites) is inevitable.

[Academic Earth](#): This site provides hundreds of free video lectures from professors at leading universities such as Yale, Stanford, Harvard, and more.

[Apple’s “iTunes U”](#): Apple's vast resource contains over 250,000 lectures, videos, films, and more. Definitely worth being aware of.

[The OpenCourseWare Consortium](#): According to Makeuseof.com, “Simply put, the OpenCourseWare Consortium is the best place to begin looking for free online video lectures”.

[Free Video Lectures](#): This site’s vision: “Everybody from every nook and corner of the world should be able to access the best Knowledge Resources available.”

Videlectures.net: Almost 7000 video lectures, with a high emphasis on Computer Science. This site makes good use of Web 2.0 tools, having a Facebook Group and Twitter account. This site also introduced me to the interesting “[Opencast Project](#)” open courseware initiative.

LearnersTV: ”Video Lectures, Video Courses, Science Animations, Lecture Notes, Online Test, Lecture Presentations. Absolutely Free”

Lecture Fox: This site is a central link repository with a very simple interface (I like the simple way in which they indicate whether each lecture has video, audio, and/or notes available).

YouTube EDU: While not all of these videos are lectures, many of them are. A search for “lecture” in this special YouTube section yields “about 60,000” results!

Video Lectures Sites from Specific Universities

These universities make lecture content available to the general public (*and yes, it is quite likely that many of these videos are featured in some of the more general sites above*).

MIT OpenCourseWare: Over 2000 Courses. MIT is leading the way with Open CourseWare. “Free lecture notes, exams, and videos from MIT. No registration required.”

Open Yale Courses: Not a lot of courses here, but the materials provided are very thorough, with complete sets of lectures and supporting materials.

Stanford University's YouTube Channel: Now well over 1,400 videos, including many lectures (unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be any obvious way to search this content in an organized manner). The example video lecture below, “Einstein's Theory of Relativity”, by Professor Leonard Susskind in Sept. 2008, is from this channel.

UCLA “BruinCast”: Most of these are ‘restricted’ (to students in those courses, I assume), but there are still many that are not. Note that to view lectures with video available, you'll need to download Real Player.

There are many other educational video sources on the Internet (*for some examples, see the ‘Related Posts’ listing below*), but I have chosen to concentrate on college level materials in this post (although a few of these sources do contain K-12 level offerings).

TED Talks

The wealth and quality of content available from [TED Talks](#) is thoroughly impressive. This

article, "[8 Great TED Talks About The Future Of Education And Teaching](#)", from June of last year, is a great introduction to the wonderful talks available to everyone through TED.

Web Site WatchKnow.org (1000's of Free Educational Videos)

[WatchKnow](#), launched in 2009, is a web site that hosts educational videos. These videos have been "deeply and usefully categorized according to subject, education level, and placed in the order in which topics are typically taught" (*quote from WatchKnow's [About page](#)*).

All the videos on WatchKnow are reviewed by a "Media Review Panel", and the site is overseen by an Advisory Council consisting predominantly of educators. This non-profit site offers a unique Age Filter, which can be coupled with a Search box and Topical Categories and Subcategories to help users search the growing database of videos for useful content.



WatchKnow is a powerful addition to the growing list of educational video web sites on the Internet (*such as [TeacherTube](#), [SchoolTube](#), etc.*), and they have attempted to provide a somewhat unique twist with their age level and categorization scheme.

Stop by and give WatchKnow a try today!

Checking out Podcasting in Education

What is Podcasting?

It's nice to start with the basics first. The word "podcasting" sounds like, and in fact is, a portmanteau of "iPod" and "broadcasting", leading to the assumption that it is about broadcasting to iPods and similar devices. A quick check at Wikipedia proves this to be a pretty accurate assumption. [Wikipedia defines a podcast](#) as being, "like a radio program except people can download a podcast to a portable media player (such as an iPod or other mp3 player) and listen to it at their convenience". Anyone can create a podcast with a computer, internet connection, and recording device. Podcasting uses [RSS feeds](#) (*the same mechanism used to distribute blog postings*) for distribution/publication. Podcasts can also incorporate video (*podcasts incorporating video are also referred to as "vidcasts" or "vodcasts"*). So, a podcast is an audio or audio-video recording you can listen to live or on demand, and access via the Internet. This leads us to the next question – how are podcasts being used in education?

Potential uses for podcasting in education

I found a great article about podcasting in education from the Office of Information Technology at the University of Minnesota (*the link has since been removed – KW 1/26/12*). The article explained that "one obvious use of podcasting in education is to create an archive of class lectures that students can listen to at their convenience. However, given the distinctive features of podcasting, its potential goes far beyond [that]." The article mentioned more uses for podcasting in educational settings, including: news/updates; guest lectures; student-produced podcasts; interviews; short language lessons or other lessons focused on developing listening and speaking skills, and supplementary material such as speeches or music. It also discussed how podcasting is a sort of time and space shifting technology – that is, with it's on demand and mobile nature, people can listen to podcasts anytime they want (once the podcast becomes available for streaming), and anywhere they want (assuming they upload them to a mobile device).

How extensive is the use of podcasting in education today?

A Google search for "who is using podcasting in education", or any similarly worded query, produces page after page of links to a wide variety of articles and other materials focused on this topic, so it would be logical to conclude that there are many educators interested in using this technology. Unfortunately, a more thorough quantitative assessment of this was not easily arrived at. I did come across sites like Findpodcasts.com, which included rankings of podcasts by popularity, organized into groups like "Education and Learning", and providing "hit counts" (*for example, 1381 hits on a podcast about "SAT, ACT, GRE Test Prep Vocabulary"*), but it was not clear what time frame those hit counts applied to, and if they were in fact "hits" or subscriptions. Hopefully, as I learn more over the next week while looking into how to actually use the technology, I may come across some better quantitative information.

More information

Here are a couple of links you might want to check out:

- This Wiki site has a great 3 minute video overview of podcasting, and a lot of related resources: <http://podcasting-in-education.wikispaces.com/>
- The “Education Podcast Network” (epnweb.org): This looks like a great source of education oriented podcasts.

Access these EmergingEdTech.com posts to explore Educational Videos, Lectures, and Podcasts further:

[TeacherTube, and other YouTube alternatives for instructional use \(part 1 of 2\)](#)

[Seven Online Classrooms Teachers Can Use to Augment Their Own](#)

Chapter 5 – Facebook in Education

Can the wildly popular social network be used constructively in the classroom? This student's story says it can.

In August of 2011, student Kristen Nicole Cardon submitted a comment in response to the post [5 Reasons Why Educators Need To Embrace Internet Technologies](#) in which she explained how she used [Facebook](#) in a course she took. I really appreciated her well stated discussion of how Facebook was used in the course and how the approach succeeded (*slightly edited in the following excerpt*).

“In my British Literary History course last winter semester, my professor created a class facebook group which we all joined. We’d finish our reading for class and then get online and write a paragraph about what we’d read, focusing our comments on the specific course aims that my professor had created for the class. We would then go to class where my professor would note the ways in which we’d covered the material well and he’d teach anything we missed as well as anything else he wanted us to know.

This way of conducting class was effective because:

1. We were socially motivated to complete the reading and contribute to the online discussion.
2. We didn’t spend class time going over that which we already understood.
3. We were able to benefit from insights from peers who generally don’t participate in class discussion.
4. We all learned to focus the vast amount of reading required for such a course to the specific course aims of our professor.
5. Through contributions from our classmates, we understood how each distinct text related to the others and to the class focus, and so on.

We shouldn’t discount Facebook when it has proven to be a worthwhile classroom tool. I should also note that a class Facebook group doesn’t require the professor or students to “friend” each other to participate.”

So Facebook was basically used to facilitate a discussion group, which can certainly be done with an LMS like Blackboard or Moodle or with various other tools, but the nice thing about Facebook is that many students are already familiar and comfortable with it – it’s a “known entity” to them. Another positive thing, which addressed a concern of mine in this

environment, was that there was a 'wall' between this academic use and the personal uses students have for the tool – by being in the group you didn't have to friend anyone or expose your personal information.

There are so many ways in which today's Internet based tools can play a creative, constructive role in the educational process ... even those tools that we shy away from because they seem more like 'pop culture' throw-aways than academic tools.

Here are a few other examples of Facebook playing a productive role in the classroom:

- **University of South Florida teacher uses Facebook in class:** I recently came across [this article](#) about USF graduate student Alessandro Cesarano, who teaches a Beginning Spanish class, and uses Facebook for homework assignments and class discussions in lieu of Blackboard. Cesarano says, "I like the Facebook page better than Blackboard because students have more access to authentic cultural material, and I don't have to waste class time teaching them how to use a new program because many of them already use Facebook."
- **Texas Kindergarten Teacher communicating with Parents via Facebook:** Kindergarten teacher Matt Gomez wrote a couple posts on his blog, [mattgomez.posterous.com](#), about his use of Facebook as a tool to communicate with parents. In [this post](#), he explained that he had, "been toying with the idea of the page for several months. The main reason is Facebook has 500 million+ users. This is a tool that most parents know how to use and use on a consistent basis. Why struggle to make parents visit your website or blog when you can meet them in a place they already visit online?" In [this post](#), he provides some observations about how it worked out.
- **Classroom 2.0 Discussion Forum:** [This discussion thread](#) has a number of comments from educators who have used Facebook in the educational setting, such as these comments from ...
 - [Jason Graham](#): "I've been using Facebook with grade 1yes grade 1. Most of the parents are on FB so its a convenient way to communicate with them, and they can send private messages as well. Most of the parents are busy on the go people who use their Blackberries and FB, Twitter etc to communicate. Its convenient for all. Plus it provides a digital record."
 - [Anne De Manser](#): "I use Facebook with my students in several ways. I find it is a great way to provide positive role modeling in an online environment by making positive comments on their Facebook walls and by providing them a window into the way my 'public ' face looks online. It's just another way of communicating and building relationships with our school community."

Setting Up a Facebook Group for Your Class

If you wish to learn more about how best to configure things in Facebook for use in a course based application, here are a few resources that provide guidance.

First, there is [this document](#) from Elon University, which offers details on how to set up profiles and course content, following this basic approach:

1. Create a teacher profile separate from your personal profile
2. Ask students to create a limited profile with controlled settings, and to friend your new teacher profile
3. Create Lists & Groups for your classes
4. The document then goes on to discuss how to use various Facebook tools as part of the instructional process

You may also want to watch these YouTube videos from “[JayDsfsu](#)“, which illustrate “[The Basics of a Facebook Page for Educators](#)“, “[Privacy on Facebook for Educators](#)“, “[Setting Up a Facebook Group for Your Class](#)“, and more.

Other ideas for using Facebook in the classroom

For those interested in giving Facebook a shot as part of their instructional process, here's a few more sources of ideas about thing you might want to try:

- [100 Ways You Should Be Using Facebook In Your Classroom](#)
- [15 Facebook Apps Perfect For Online Education](#)
- [How To Use Facebook Questions In The Classroom](#)

Access these EmergingEdTech.com posts to explore Facebook in Educational uses further:

[Facebook Summit 2011, an Excellent Academic Use of the Popular Internet App](#)

[10 Beneficial Facebook Pages For Educators To Check Out](#)

Chapter 6 – Free Productivity Resources

In 2011, EmergingEdTech published this [page of “Free Productivity Resources” for educators](#), accessible as a Tab in site's top menu bar. This page is updated regularly, so I recommend checking there for the most up to date content if you are looking at a specific type of tool and don't see it below.

(There is a fair amount of overlap between these listings and other free resources in this book – this was inevitable, given the intent of the original posts and resources from which this content was based. - KW)

This listing is divided into two key groups – tools intended specifically for educators, and general applications intended for everyone.

We've made an effort to provide a worthy set of resources in each of these categories (***and to avoid resources that seem of lesser quality or functionality***). All of these applications are free (some have both free and paid versions). Some sites may require registration. If you know of any similar quality tools that you think deserve consideration, please stop by the page on site and drop a comment to share them.

RESOURCES DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR EDUCATORS

Activity & Materials Creators

- Awards Certificates: www.educationworld.com/tools_templates/index.shtml#awardCertificates
- Bookmarks and Book Plates: www.educationworld.com/tools_templates/index.shtml#book
- Calendars & Classroom Organizers:
www.educationworld.com/tools_templates/index.shtml#book
- Flash Cards – Create Your Own at StudyStack (have to register):
www.studystack.com/CreateStack.jsp
- Flash Card Exchange (register for adv. functions): www.flashcardexchange.com
- Form filler (have to register): www.fillanypdf.com
- Holiday & Seasonal Worksheets: www.abcteach.com/directory/seasonal/
- Puzzle Maker (lots of types – word search, math squares, mazes, much more!):
puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com
- Word Search Puzzles (lots of them): www.thepotters.com/puzzles.html
- Worksheets (lots of preformatted worksheets): www.superteacherworksheets.com

Communications Tools (Print & Electronic)

- EducationWorld Newsletters & Parent Communications: www.educationworld.com/tools_templates/index.shtml#newsletters
- TeacherFiles: www.teacherfiles.com/resources_newsletters.htm

Course Management Systems & LMS alternatives

(You have to register to use these tools, so you can save your own personalized content. Note that these tools are generally more involved than many of the other resources on this page. Some of them offer both paid and free functionality)

- Blackboard's "CourseSites": coursesites.blackboard.com *(this is a secure site and you may get notification of this as you attempt to access it)*
- EctoLearning: www.ectolearning.com
- MyiCourse: www.mycourse.com
- rCampus: www.rcampus.com/help/about/course_and_learning_management_system.cfm
- Schoology: www.schoology.com
- SchoolRack: www.schoolrack.com

Clipart

- DiscoveryEducation: school.discoveryeducation.com/clipart
- School-Clipart: www.school-clipart.com
- TeacherFiles: www.teacherfiles.com/clip_art.htm

Educational Videos

- A Dozen Free Online Video Lecture Sites: www.emergingedtech.com/2010/02/a-dozen-great-free-online-video-lecture-sites
- Seven Online Classrooms Teachers Can Use to Augment Their Own: www.emergingedtech.com/2012/01/seven-online-classrooms-teachers-can-use-to-augment-their-own/ *(some overlap here with some of the listings in above article)*
- Watchknow: www.watchknow.org

Interactives (for White Boards, or Powerpoint)

- [4 Free Digital Whiteboard Apps for the iPad](#)
- ABCTeach: www.abcteach.com/directory/interactive
- Promethean Planet (have to register): www.prometheanplanet.com
- SMART Exchange: exchange.smarttech.com
- TopMarks: www.topmarks.co.uk/Interactive.aspx

iPhone, iPad, and Android Apps

- [100 free iPhone Apps for Educators](#)
- [Free iPad Apps for Educators \(and Parents\)](#)
- [Attendance](#) (for Android)
- [Grade Book](#) (for Android)
- [Grade Rubric](#) (for Android)
- [Grade Ticker](#) (for Android)

Lesson Plans

- AtoZ Teacher Stuff: atozteacherstuff.com/Lesson_Plans/index.shtml
- Discovery Education: school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans
- LessonPlansPage: www.lessonplanspage.com
- Scholastic: www2.scholastic.com/browse/lessonplans.jsp
- Teacher.net: teachers.net/lessons

Open Educational Resources

- OER Consortium: oerconsortium.org
- OER Commons: www.oercommons.org

Presentation Tools

- Teacher's recommendations for academic uses of 5 fun free presentation tools:
www.emergingedtech.com/2012/01/teachers-recommendations-for-academic-uses-of-5-fun-free-presentation-tools/

Quizzes & Tests

(These types of sites require sign up)

- Easy Test Maker: www.easytestmaker.com
- Quizstar: quizstar.4teachers.org/indexi.jsp

Rubrics

- 4TEachers: rubistar.4teachers.org
- Rubrics4Teachers: www.rubrics4teachers.com
- iRubrics: www.rcampus.com/indexrubric.cfm

Social Learning & Collaboration

- Edmodo: www.edmodo.com
- Edutopia: www.edutopia.org

- Room21: room21online.com
- TakingITGlobal: www.tigweb.org

OTHER/Miscellaneous

- [EmergingEdTech's 2011 Free Education Technology Resources eBook](#)
- [Do You Know About The Many Free Resources For Education Available from Apple?](#)
- [Google Apps for Education](#)
- [Microsoft Live@EDU](#)
- [OnlineCollegeClasses.com](#): Searching for online courses
- [FreeTech4Teachers](#) (Richard Byrne's excellent blog, with lots of free resources that featured daily).
- [The Definitive Source for Information About IT Issues Effecting Higher Education](#)

GENERAL RESOURCES (not intended just for educators)

Animation

- [GoAnimate](#)
- [Voki](#)

Blogging

- [Blogger](#)
- [Edublogs](#)
- [WordPress](#)

Document Management

- [Google Docs](#)
- [Zoho](#)

File Management

- [Dropbox](#)

Group Projects

- [EnterTheGroup](#)

Literature Summary/Analysis

- [CliffNotes](#)
- [SparkNotes](#)

Mind Mapping

- Bubbl.us

Online Interactive White Boards

- [4 Free Digital Whiteboard Apps for the iPad](#)
- [Dabbleboard](#) *(link wasn't working as of 1/27/12 – not sure if this is temporary or permanent)*
- [Scribblar](#)

Picture, Photo, & Image Editing & Organizing

- [Aviary](#)
- [FotoFlexer](#)
- [Photofunia](#)
- [Picasa](#)
- [Pixenate](#)

PowerPoint

- [Watch this video](#) to learn about creating your own Custom Animations, and learn about many other free resources.
- [This tutorial](#) from Online Tech Tips explains how to create slide transition automations using easy pre-configured tools in PowerPoint.
- [Click here to access a preconfigured search](#) of Microsoft's Office Site, set up to return dozens of articles with hundreds of free templates for PowerPoint.
- [PresentationMagazine.com](#) provides tons of tips, articles, PowerPoint templates, and more

Screencasting & Presentations

- [Fotobabble](#)
- [Glogster](#)
- [Jing](#)
- [OneTrueMedia](#)
- [Prezi](#)
- [Screenpresso](#)
- [Screenr](#)
- [Screencast-O-matic](#)
- [Slideshare](#)
- [ZohoShow](#)
- [Voki](#)

Twitter

- 4 Great Twitter Applications for Teachers Using Twitter In The Classroom (*3 of these have free functionality*): www.emergingedtech.com/2011/10/4-great-twitter-applications-for-teachers-using-twitter-in-the-classroom/

Other/Miscellaneous

- Random.org (a true random number generator that some teachers have said they find useful).
- [Read it Later](#)

Chapter 7 - Interactive White Boards

Last year, there were three good interactive white boards apps we knew of, but since then one has gone off line (*ImaginationCubed* from GE no longer appears to be available) and another one (Dabbleboard) isn't working as of late January, 2012. This leaves Scribblar. We'll have to do some poking around to seek out new tools in this category. Speaking of which, there are definitely some new free IWBs available for iPad users. Learn more about these here: [Using The iPad As A Digital Whiteboard \(Plus 4 Cool Free Apps To Try It Out\)](#).



[Scribblar.com](#): This is a nice tool for collaborating. You can easily invite others to participate, and there are plenty of useful tools for drawing and editing. You can also chat or use voice to communicate with each other. You can save images (use the Snapshot icon, which will save images to the Assets pane, where they can be downloaded from). Scribblar is definitely worth trying out!

Access these EmergingEdTech.com posts to explore Interactive White Boards further:

[9 insightful videos about using SMART Boards in the Classroom](#)

[PolyVision ̃no whiteboards: A great alternative to the SMART Board](#)

[The Eno Interactive Whiteboard – A Teacher's First Glimpse](#)

[Taking Mimio's low-cost, portable Interactive White Board device for a test run](#)

[Using The iPad As A Digital Whiteboard \(Plus 4 Cool Free Apps To Try It Out\)](#)

Chapter 8 – iPads in Education

It has been my experience that this year, no single application or tools has gained more attention in 2011 than the iPad. With the release of the iPad 2 at the start of the year, Apple set a stage for a new niche of computing device – tablets had been discussed for years, but in 2011, the iPad become a game changer.

A growing number of schools have launched programs to provide iPads to students. I wrote [this article](#) in July, as a start in looking into what return this investment is yielding. I wrote a number of articles about various school's uses of the iPad over the course of the year and share several of them in the "learn more" section below.

There are many great applications available for free for the iPad. I have written a number of posts about these types of apps, and in each case, I work to focus on apps that provide truly useful functionality for free (as opposed to the many apps that use limited free functionality as 'bait' to encourage you to purchase a paid application.

Following is a selection of three articles that offer 14 different free apps across a spectrum of educational uses.

Using The iPad As A Digital Whiteboard (Plus 4 Cool Free Apps To Try It Out)

Four recommended free digital white board apps:

ScreenChomp

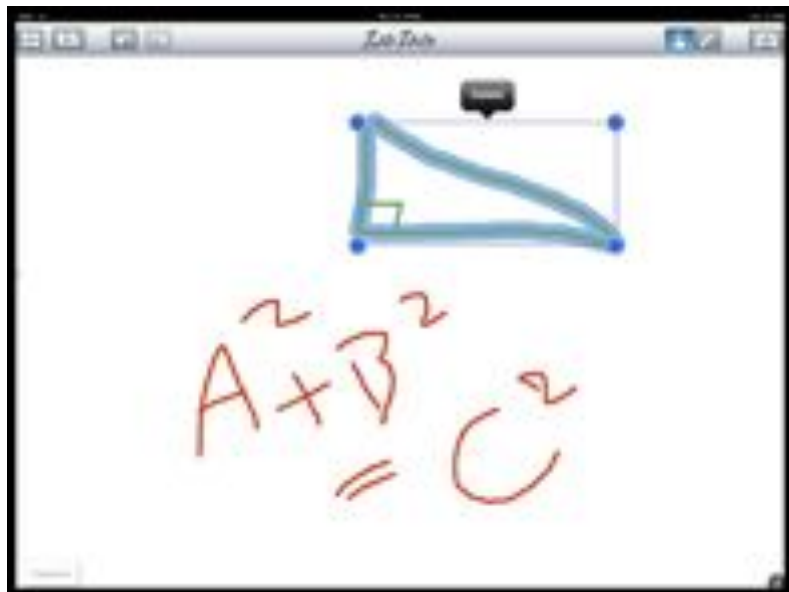
This TechSmith app was rated (an average of) 4.5 by hundreds of users. [ScreenChomp](#) provides 9 colors but just one pen size. You can import pictures to use as your background. Mostly importantly, you can record your whiteboard session for play back, and the recording will include audio. Recordings can be saved to the ScreenChomps app, and can be shared via email, Facebook, Twitter, and accessed through a URL.

This app is a great example of combining a few simple features to make a tool that is very useful. Here's an example ScreenChomp video I created: <http://www.screenchomp.com/t/Z2xnmkfS>.

ZigZag Board

[ZigZag Board](#) had one unique offering among the free tools I looked at, which is the ability to select and resize things you draw (as well as move or delete them). It is similar to some of the other apps in that it has a small selection of pen colors and the ability to adjust the thickness of the pen (but no ability to pull a pic to draw on). ZigZag also allows users to have a "meeting"

with the app. The meeting functionality was easy to use – I started a meeting from the iPad app and then joined on my laptop, but I was only able to view the whiteboard session there, I could not actually participate in it *(not sure if this works differently when you join from an iPad, we had a network issue and couldn't connect from another iPad)*.



Unlike most of these other tools, Zig Zag requires the user to create an account. Once you sign up, there's a nice page-by-page tutorial on how to use the drawing tools and how multi-touch gestures work within the app.

SyncSpace

[SyncSpace](#) allows for a choice of 9 colors, 4 pen thicknesses, and 2 pen styles (solid or dashed), which was more than the other apps provided. Two unique features the app has are its ability to scale the screen to any size (it seems that you can shrink or expand your whiteboard indefinitely), and its synchronize capability, which allows for **true collaboration**. My son and I tried this and it was easy and worked well. You can also export files as PDFs, post them to Facebook, Twitter, or Campfire (a collaboration app), or email a link to other iPad users.

One down side of SyncSpace is that it did not work in landscape (horizontal) mode, making it a little less ideal for projecting.

Jot!Free

The [Free version of Jot](#) has a pretty nice set of functionality including: 4 colors and 4 pen sizes, the ability to move a drawing and to add a background, and to add text. You share your drawings via email or save them as a photo. There's a premium app available for \$4.99 that provides more colors, more line widths, 5 fonts to select from, and live sharing.

The other four apps shown in the search results I eliminated for the following reasons:

- Show Me Interactive Whiteboard: Show Me seemed like ScreenChomp without the audio recording capability.
- Doceri Remote: Required the installation of an additional application in order to use it, and it appeared that I would probably have to pay that app at some point.
- Sign+: This should not have been in the list as it for creating a “digital sign”, and does not have the interactive nature of a true digital whiteboard.
- SMART Bridgit Conference: This requires you to have a SMART board and applicable server in place.

Connecting the iPad to a projector or HD TV

This seems pretty straightforward if you have the right components. I can't wait to try this, and I'll be sure to share my results here.

- You will need the [Apple Digital AV Adapter](#) (\$39) and an [HDMI Cable](#) (under \$10).
- Your projector or TV will have to have an HDMI interface.
- [This eHow article](#) explains the basic process of connecting your iPad to your projector.

Five Fun Free iPad Apps for Elementary School Teachers And Students

Preschool Memory Match

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/preschool-memory-match/id368542467?mt=8>

This is your standard memory match game (flip tiles two at a time, looking for matches), and it comes in 4 levels of complexity from Easy to “Super Duper Hard”. The game uses mostly pictures of animals and provides and displays and pronounces their names, which provides additional learning opportunities.

Times Table Quiz

<http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/times-tables-quiz/-multiplication/id441001315?mt=8>

This is a rudimentary, but very useful app that tests students skills with math times tables. The app presents random multiplication questions from the spectrum of times tables from 2×2 to 12 x 12, providing 4 possible answers in multiple choice format, and you keep going to see how many you can get right in a row. When you guess an incorrect answer, it stops and tells you the correct answer and you start over. This is geared towards later grades, as it does not allow for setting the level of the times tables – it just mixes the full range.

Trainyard EX

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/trainyard-express/id348724199?mt=8>

This application is great for the younger grades, as it guides the student slowly through a smooth learning curve with an increasingly complex task of designing a path for one or more trains to get point A to point B. As you progress through successive successful completions of the game it gets more complicated, working it's way up to some pretty involved challenges!

BrainPop's Featured Movie

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/brainpop-featured-movie/id364894352?mt=8>

BrainPop is a powerful application, with a wide range of functionality in its relatively inexpensive paid versions, but they provide the Featured Movie feature on their iPad app for free, and elementary school teachers might find it worth using. Students can watch a different animated movie each day, then test their knowledge with an interactive quiz. The movies are well done short animated clips on a wide variety of subjects, providing a fun, engaging way to learn.

Amazing Shape Puzzle Lite Version

<http://itunes.apple.com/app/amazing-shape-puzzle-lite/id469339346?mt=8>

This app has three free puzzles that can be fun and educational for younger elementary school students. The app works in English, Spanish, French, and German and provides Word Learning opportunities in addition to developing concentration, memory, and cognitive skills.

5 Fun Free iPad Math Game Apps

My Math App Flashcards ([link here](#)): This is a great application, providing flash card style testing for multiplication, subtraction, multiplication, and division, with “Starter” and “Advanced” versions for each function, making it useful across a wide range of grade levels.

Math Puppy ([link here](#)): This app has 2 games and a calculator. Math Bingo is a simple bingo style game (complete a row of correct answers and win) and Math Challenge prompts the user through consecutive sets of questions, up multiple levels, with difficulty increasing along the way.

Multiplying Acorns ([link here](#)): This is a cute, straightforward game in which you select two digits to multiply together, and then have to select the correct answer from several choices. The multiplication is represented pictorially in the form of acorns, to provide visual learning support. You can select a maximum high number for use in the game (up to 9), to make it more age/grade appropriate.

Motion Math: Hungry Fish ([link here](#)): This was fun – you drag bubbles onto each other to add up to a desired total and then the fish eats them! A simple straightforward game that young kids will enjoy. The more advanced version (which you have to pay for) provides subtraction, multiplication, and division.

Factor Samurai ([link here](#)): This is better geared towards higher grades than the apps above, as it requires awareness of prime factors, but it was so much fun to play I wanted to include it. There are three levels, and the lowest level is worth trying for students learning multiples of 2 or 3. As numbers fly on to the screen, you tap on those that are not prime, to break them into factors. If a number breaks into a factor that can be broken down further, click on it to break it down again. Give it a try (*older students or adults, try the “Apprentice” or “Master” levels!*).

Access these EmergingEdTech.com posts to explore iPads in Education further:

[Study shows 15% improvement in 5th grader's fractions test scores after playing iPad Motion Math game for a week](#)

[The year of the iPad in Education: they're being distributed in more schools every day.](#)

[SketchPad Explorer is a fun free \(until Sep 1\) iPad math app for grades 3 to 12](#)

[Seton Hill University's iPad rollout – more insights from a model implementation](#)

[iPads In Education – How's It Going So Far?](#)

Chapter 9 - Picture And Image Editing Applications

A closer look at 5 free picture and image editing tools

I read the Campus Technology article, "[The Super-Secret, Never-Before-Revealed Guide to Web 2.0 in the Classroom](#)", when it was published on October 2010, and there is a section in it entitled "[4 Itty-Bitty Content Tools](#)", which in turn has a subsection titled "Become An Image Editor". They mentioned five photo editing tools in that section, but didn't go into a lot of detail about them. I sat down and took most of them for a trial run. Here's what I learned.



Pixenate

[This tool](#) has features like "red eye reduction", "normalize" (improve color balance), "fill light" (lighten entire pic), "whiten teeth" (although I found the result a little overdone in the example I tested), and "colors tool" (lets you change brightness, saturation, and hue). But the real fun here is the "fun effects", such as Lomo (add a soft, dark halo around photo), speech bubbles, snowflakes, a filtering tool, and more. You can order prints and products like t-shirts, mugs, etc., that incorporate your masterpiece.

Wet Floor Maker

[This tool](#) "turns your photos into cool reflecting images" - you can choose which axis to reflect on, the degree of reflection, and other options. This is a neat idea, but the end result is a small low-res image, and I don't see any option to let you get a larger end product.

Mypict

[This applet](#) lets you upload a picture, select a section of it using a presized frame, then save it or email it. The idea is to give you a very easy way to create a profile picture for social networks, but you can do this very easily using Paint on a PC (and I believe Mac Picture Editor is the equivalent on the Mac).

Roundpic

[Roundpic](#) automatically rounds the edges of a picture, but it's limited to 1 MB pictures. It

also doesn't appear to offer any control over the way the rounding effect is applied. Pixenate does the same thing but provides some control over the degree of rounding, and also let's you fill the corners with color. You can actually create a multi-layered corner look by applying the technique a couple times.

Picasa

Google's photo editing and management tool offers functionality well beyond those cited above, and it is free, but it has to be downloaded and installed. In addition to photo enhancement features, [Picasa](#) also let's you share photos online, create online photo albums, and more. Of course, there are also options to order products that incorporate your photos. If you work with photos a lot, Picasa is probably worth downloading and setting up. To learn more about it, [click here](#).

More fun, free online photo and image editing tools

Building on (the above) review of free image editing applications with a look at 5 more of these types of tools.

In the above article we looked at 5 free online picture and image editing tools that I had seen mentioned in this Campus Technology article. When I originally published that article, a few readers responded to the post and mentioned some other tools they liked. I took a look at those tools, and share my experiences and observations about them below. I also did a little searching to find other popular free, web based tools that I hadn't come across already, tried a couple of them out too.

Aviary (Phoenix image editor)

I found [Aviary](#) to be a lot of fun. Aviary is actually a suite of tools for working with a variety of media types, including photos, video, and audio. Their image editor is an app they call [Phoenix](#), and it has standard functions to control things like Brightness & Contrast, and Hue & Saturation. There is also a set of cool filters that produce effects like the "Metal Glow" effect shown in the picture below. I guess I'm a bit of a sucker for cool effects like this, but it seems to be one of the things that often differentiates these tools from each other.



Aviary has a good deal of other functionality that goes well beyond the standard fare offered by many other free online image editing apps, and a bunch of great [tutorials](#) about how to use them. I may have to revisit Aviary to learn more!

Photofunia

An aptly named tool, [Photofunia](#) really is fun! This application uses face recognition technology to merge a picture of a face into any of over a hundred different preformatted scenarios, like the amusing example I've included below. There is also a "Lab" area where you can do things like create an animated GIF using up to 5 pictures, and much more. While the utility of this application is very specific, it is a really pretty neat and worth checking out.



FotoFlexer

FotoFlexer claims to be "The world's most advanced online editing tool" (it's right there in their [home page](#)!). Like many of the other tools we looked at there are simple image editing and correction tools, but the array of effects and other image enhancing and manipulating tools does in fact seem to be more extensive than any of the other tools I've

looked at so far. These are grouped into Tabbed sections such as “Beautify”, “Decorate”, “Animations”, “Effects”, “Distort”, and more. Below is an image I applied the “Color Sketch” effect to.



FotoFlexer really does look like a pretty serious application for image editing and enhancement, and is quite impressive for a free tool!

Photoscape

Photoscape.org was mentioned by a reader on the [EmergingEdTech Facebook Fan Page](#), so I took a peek at it. The app is free, but it had to be downloaded and installed, and I just don't see a real good reason to do that since I don't see any features that look notably different from those available in fully online apps (*why burden my computer with more software, registry updates, etc., if there's no real benefit?*). The one feature that did jump out as being something that I haven't seen mentioned in other tools is a 'Batch editor', which could allow you to perform edits (presumably the same types of edit) on a group of pictures, which might be useful, and worth checking out if you do a lot of photo editing.

Picnik

[Picnik](#) has some standard picture correcting and enhancing tools, in a nicely organized format. Picnik offers some really cool looking overlays and effects, but you have to pay to use them (plans start at about \$2/mo.). Given the functionality I've already seen in other free tools, I just don't see the need to consider Picnik further at this time.

Conclusions & Recommendations

I could have spent weeks looking at these types of tools – there are so many of these. I think that several of the tools that I looked at this week and last are very worth knowing about and putting to use depending on your needs. These were my favorites:

- [Aviary](#): I valued this tool for it's wide range of functionality (beyond just images).
- [FotoFlexer](#): While I don't really have the expertise to weigh in on whether or not this app truly is "the world's most advanced online editing tool", I can certainly say that it has an impressive range of utility, and may be one tool that meets most image editing needs.
- [Picasa](#): While this app does need to be downloaded and installed, it may be worth it if you do a lot with photos. In addition to photo correction, image editing and more, it can help you organize and share photos, and purchase prints and products containing your images.
- [Pixenate](#): Some of the effects here (*things like Lomo, or the Speech Bubble*) I didn't see in some of these other tools, so this is a good app to keep in mind if you're looking for that sort of thing.
- [Photofunia](#): This was a very unique app with the specific function of inserting pictures of faces into pre-configured templates. There are over a hundred of these templates and the results can be pretty funny, and pretty impressive.

If you wish to learn more about other free image editing applications, I found [this Squidoo page](#) to be a good source of insight into popular tools. It has a nice clickable Tag Cloud with links to a lot of popular tools.

Access these EmergingEdTech.com posts to explore Picture & Image Editing further:

[Picasa – Google's free picture and image editing and management tool](#)

[Tutorial – 5 Fun Free Photo And Image Editing Applications For The Classroom](#)

Chapter 10 - Presentations & Screencasting

There are plenty of free presentation and screencasting tools available on the Internet, and here check out a variety of them. We start with a look at tools to help jazz up PowerPoint slides. Then we get into presentation applications Prezi and Slideshare. After that we have check out free screencasting app 'Jing', followed by a brief review of 12 different free screencasting tools. We wrap up with a look at the 5 free presentation tools and suggestions from teachers about ways to consider for using them in the classroom or other professional situations.

Breathe New Life Into Your PowerPoint Slides With Dozens Of Exciting Free Tools & Resources

A wealth of free resources that can help you jazz up those tired old (or new) lesson slides and presentations.

Thanks to a preponderance of boring content, PowerPoint has earned an undeserved bad name. It has become an all-too-easy target for bashing in today's web media. At a recent education conference, someone used the phrase "Power Corrupts, but PowerPoint Corrupts Absolutely" and they got a lot of laughs.

At the same time, we've all seen PowerPoint presentations that made us stop and think, "wow – that's pretty cool, how'd they do that?" Or even better, we got so caught up in the presentation that we completely forgot about the medium of the slide deck.

Following are a number of ideas and free resources that can help you add fun and pizzazz to your PowerPoint slide presentations by incorporating engaging visual and audio elements. The extent to which you evolve your slides is limited only by the time you wish to devote to it, and how imaginative you are. Of course, it's also important not get carried away (which is easy to do with some of these tools), so remember that the addition of a couple simple visual or audio elements is usually more than enough to add new life to an old slide deck, or make a new one fun for both you and your students.

Add Animations

PowerPoint includes easy tools that make it a snap to add exciting visual elements to your slides using automated animations.

- **Slide Transitions:** [This tutorial](#) from Online Tech Tips explains how to create slide transition automations using easy pre-configured tools in PowerPoint.
- **Custom Animations:** You can really kick it up a notch by creating your own custom animations, which is easier than you might think. [This tutorial](#) from Utah State University

explains some of the different animation effects and how to use them (this was written for PowerPoint 2003, but the same effects are available in the 2007 version, and are found on a standalone Animations menu rather than under the Slide Show menu). [This tutorial from About.com](#) discusses the use of Animations in PowerPoint 2010.

Add cool free picture and text effects and backgrounds using dozens of templates for PowerPoint from Microsoft

There are so many of these cool free templates available on the Internet today. [Click here to access a preconfigured search](#) of Microsoft's Office Site, set up to return dozens of articles with hundreds of free templates for PowerPoint. To use the templates, you just download them and then follow the instructions provided in the articles.

These template sets range from simple, ready-to-use slides, to much more sophisticated templates that require significant effort to update with your own images, but can produce spectacular results. Below are two examples of the kinds of template sets available here, a simple one and a more advanced set:

- [This is a set of a dozen backgrounds](#) that can be used as is by just inserting text boxes, etc., or if you wish, you can follow the included instructions to learn how to create similarly themed backgrounds using your own images.
- [This advanced set of templates](#) contains two dozen striking animations and step-by-step instructions on how to recreate each of them with your own pictures and text (it will take some time and effort to work through the process).

Add audio to your presentations

Adding audio elements to your presentation is a wonderful way to modernize them and make them more appealing to viewers. Here's a couple resources that offer two different approaches to doing this.

- **Add Audio or Music to Your PowerPoint Presentations**
[This article](#) from the online magazine Presentation Magazine (*more on that below*) explains how to add audio files to your presentations so they can play in the background.
- **Slideshare Presentations Plus Audio**
[SlideShare](#) is a popular free tool that lets you upload your PowerPoint decks and run them across the web. [This SlideShare presentation](#) explains how you can add audio to a SlideShare deck using the free application [Audacity](#).

Check out Presentation Magazine for tons of tips, tricks, and templates:

<http://www.presentationmagazine.com/>

This online magazine has lots of great resources focused on improving your PowerPoint presentations, such as:

- [A whole section](#) of articles devoted to enhancing your PowerPoint presentations
- [Tips to give your PowerPoint presentation the 'wow factor'](#)
- Plenty of articles focused specifically on [PowerPoint 2010](#)
- Hundreds of [free PowerPoint templates](#)

“Bonus Option” – Consider synchronizing video to your slides with Zentation.com:

www.zentation.com

Zentation comes in various pricing levels, and the free option claims to allow users to upload a video to YouTube and then “create a new presentation in Zentation to synchronize your YouTube video with your PowerPoint slides”. We have not tried this yet here at EmergingEdTech, but it sounded so interesting, we figured we’d throw it out there for your consideration!

Advanced PowerPoint Tutorials

If you wish to learn more on your own, there are plenty of resources available to you on the web. Here are a couple listings to get you started.

- The [Advanced PowerPoint Tutorial Series](#) from About.com
- [Advanced Power Point Tutorial Video search results](#) from Bing

Prezi & Slideshare - 2 Great Online Presentation Tools for E-Learning

These two widely used presentation applications are accessible from any web browser.

*This article was originally published on EmergingEdTech as a guest post by **Mark Davies**.*

If you want to present a lecture without too many words, then your best bet is to prepare a presentation and let your slides talk for themselves. This makes presentations a convenient tool for teaching online courses. There are quite a few Web 2.0 presentation creation tools available, but the best free options to consider are [Prezi](#) and [SlideShare](#), both of which are briefly reviewed below.



Prezi

- It's an unconventional presentation design application because you don't have to create individual slides
- You have a workspace where you can create non-linear presentations which you can navigate with the help of pointers – a map shows you how to move around the presentation.
- The user interface is intuitive and easier to understand the more you use it.
- It's great for creating unconventional, interesting and visually appealing presentations.
- It's designed in Flash, which explains the visual brilliance.
- It comes in both free and paid versions – if you don't want to shell out money, the free package comes with 100 MB of storage space and a player that allows you to view your presentations offline. However, you cannot create presentations offline, and all your presentations are stamped with the Prezi logo and published publicly in the showcase. There are other plans that have more features and which you have to buy, so if you're a serious user, you can try the Enjoy plan or the Pro package.
- It's initially a little difficult to use, but there are many video demos that help you find your way, and once you get the hang of it, Prezi is a great tool for designing presentations online.



SlideShare

- It's more of a presentation sharing tool than one that helps in creating them.
- It allows you to upload and host your presentations in common formats like Microsoft PowerPoint or OpenOffice on an online community.
- The user interface is simply designed and easy to use.
- It converts all presentations to the Flash format. However, this is a time consuming process, so with a slow connection, you could end up spending quite a few hours waiting for your presentations to upload.
- A big advantage of SlideShare is that you don't need to have PowerPoint or any other software installed to view the presentations online (because they're converted into the Flash format).
- The Flash format also allows you to embed these presentations in your blog or on your website.
- You can restrict viewing privileges and control who sees your online presentations.
- SlideShare allows you to view your presentations in the full-screen mode.
- It's completely free to use.

As you can see from the above points, Prezi is good for professional users while SlideShare

works well for those who're just experimenting with online presentation design tools and looking for ways to share them online.

Screencasting with JING



Jing lets you capture screen shots or capture screen motion (a.k.a. “screencasting”), and record audio at the same time. Captured images can be annotated with text, arrows, and highlights. This makes it pretty easy to make a brief presentation to demonstrate how to do something on the computer.

Jing in action

I used Jing to create this tutorial video, which discusses e-mail storage constraints and some suggestions on how to work with them: <http://www.youtube.com/user/EmergingEdTech#p/u/10/-fDfxW0ygDU>.

I used the inexpensive paid version of Jing, since I wanted to create a file to load on YouTube where it would be readily accessible. Jing also enables easy sharing of presentations through [Screencast.com](http://www.screencast.com). See “**Free vs. Paid options**” below for more on the differences between the free and paid versions.

To make the video, I created a Powerpoint Presentation, which I played slide by slide and spoke over. I interspersed this with captures of screen activity in Outlook, where I demonstrated a few ideas as I discussed them.

While the result is only 5 minutes long (*Jing videos are limited to 5 minutes*), it shouldn't come as a big surprise that it took a much longer time to put together. I had to script out what I wanted to discuss, create the PowerPoint slide deck, practice the presentation, and record it a couple times to try and get a good take (*I still made a couple minor errors*). The good part is that it was simple to do from a technical perspective and the result can be viewed over and over again.

For an overview of how to use Jing to create presentations, check out [this video](#) from the Jing web site.

Free vs. Paid options

The free version of Jing has a great deal of functionality, and will probably be more than

adequate for most users. If you find you really like the product, but require some of the advanced features, the good news is that the paid version is very inexpensive at only \$14.95 per year.

One main difference between the Paid and Free options for Jing appears to be the ability to save files in MP4 format using the paid option, which makes it easy to upload high quality copies of your Jing presentations to YouTube and similar hosting sites. Another advantage of the paid version is better quality motion capture for screencasting, although this is probably only important if you are capturing from a video source. You can also capture directly from a Webcam using the paid version.

Improving learning outcomes with tools like Jing

So, how can tutorial presentations like this help to enhance learning outcomes? By using both visual and audio content, they engage the visual and auditory learner, which is a good thing (*but of course nothing is quite as engaging as an enthusiastic instructor!*). Being able to easily rewind and replay this a presentation on demand is another benefit of this format.

I believe that one very good way in which a presentation tool like this can be used constructively is to have students view it outside of the classroom (as homework, for example), or perhaps at the start of a class session. Valuable, face-to-face classroom time can then be focused on reviewing and discussing the tutorial's content, and reinforcing and practicing it's lessons.

Comparing Free Screencasting Tools

Combing through the basic functions and features of a list of tools I've become aware of, to select some for further testing.

When I wrote this article, I had a goal of trying identify a free tool or set of tools to use to create stand alone tutorials by combining screen images and screen motion with audio. I also wanted some editing capabilities, so I could combine multiple captures and rearrange the order of these pieces if needed, and to be able to re-record audio annotation if possible, as well as screen annotation capabilities, at least for the screen captures.

I did some web searching and learned a little about a lot of different tools, which I summarized in table format (on the following pages).

Feature/Function Summary Table

Application	File Format(s)	Sharing Files	Editing Capabilities
Jing.com	SWF (Shockwave Flash)	Files are created on the local PC (the app runs locally, not on the Internet). SWF files are stand alone and can be shared like any other file (and viewed with any SWF compatible viewer), or via Screencast.com.	Screen images can be edited
Other Jing Notes: <i>Presentations are limited to 5 min. in length. Inexpensive Pro version (\$14.95/yr.) provides <u>add'l</u> capabilities (such as MP4 file format).</i>			
Screenpresso.com	PNG, JPG, GIF, BMP	Captured image files can be easily be shared.	Many editing tools for manipulating and annotating the captured images.
Other Screenpresso Notes: <i>Screenpresso is just for image capture, not for screen motion capture (it really doesn't belong in this list!).</i>			
Screenr.com	Unknown	Presentations (stored on the site) can easily be shared via email links, and can also be embedded on websites. <i>[I have since learned that files can also be downloaded as .mp4 files. KW 1/24/10]</i>	None
Notes: <i>Screenr's main focus is sharing screencasts via Twitter.</i>			
Screencast-O-matic.com	.MOV	Files can be exported, and therefore easily shared or uploaded to sites like YouTube. Presentations can also be stored on the <u>Screencast-O-matic</u> site and accessed by URL or embed code.	None (in free version)
Other Screencast-O-matic Notes: <i>Videos can be up to 15 minutes long. There is a Pro version that allows files up to 1 hr. on length and provides more functionality.</i>			

Application	File Format(s)	Sharing Files	Editing Capabilities
Screencastle.com	Unknown	Presentations (stored on the site) can be shared via email links, and can also be embedded on websites.	None
<i>Other Screencastle Notes: <u>Screencastle</u> does not use log ins, so all casts are instantly available to everyone, and are not linked to individual accounts. One interesting feature of the site is the availability of widgets for automated <u>screencasting</u> from within <u>WordPress</u> and some other tools.</i>			
Webinaria.com	AVI, FLV	Files are stored on the site, and can easily be shared via email links, and can also be embedded on websites. Files can also be downloaded in .FLV format, for viewing with any Flash compatible viewer.	None
CamStudio.org	AVI, SWF	Files are created on the local PC (the app runs locally, not on the Internet), and can therefore easily be distributed. These formats can be uploaded to YouTube and other video sharing sites for web based sharing.	None
Faculte.com	Unknown	Presentations (stored on the site) can be shared via email links, and can also be embedded on websites.	There are a number of editing capabilities, including the ability to add captions to video.
<i>Other Faculte Notes: <u>Faculte</u> is really intended to be a paid tool. The free option limits presentation creators to just 200 views of their presentation.</i>			

Application	File Format(s)	Sharing Files	Editing Capabilities
Debut from NCHsoftware*	AVI, WMV, FLV, ASF, MPG, 3GP, MP4, MOV, and more	Files are created on the local PC (the app runs locally, not on the Internet), and can therefore easily be distributed. These formats can be uploaded to YouTube and other video sharing sites for web based sharing.	There are a number of editing capabilities, including the ability to add captions to video.
<i>Other Debut Notes: There is a paid "Plus" version of Debut available, with various add-on applets available as well to provide additional functionality.</i>			

*The URL for Debut is <http://www.nchsoftware.com/capture>

[Ed Note - After writing this article, I learned that Screenr.com allows files to be downloaded, and after trying this tool, I really liked it - KW 1/31/10]

Teacher's recommendations for academic uses of 5 fun free presentation tools

Course participants offered their ideas about ways to use these fun free tools in instructional situations and other academic applications.

One of the most meaningful and informative types of communication that happens through education technology blogs like this one is when teachers share their experiences and ideas about how to use technology in the educational setting.



In the summer of 2012, EmergingEdTech ran an online workshop in which participants learned about a variety of free digital presentation tools. With each tool, we got hands-on and created brief presentations, and then discussed our experiences and shared ideas on how we might use these tools in our professional roles. The participants shared a lot of good ideas, and I've been meaning to share some of them here.

Following are some of the tools we used, and some of the ideas offered for how to put them to use in education. For brevity, I limited the comments to a few per app, but some of the comments offered had quite a few different ideas packed into them. Hopefully some of these suggestions spark some creative thinking for our readers, and inspire them to try some of these fun presentation apps themselves!

Glogster

[Glogster](#) is a tool for creating unique, interactive digital “posters”, to share ideas, pictures, videos, and more. Learn more about Glogster [here](#) (on their “What Is Glogster?” page).

“I have been eager to create a wiki-based Glogster gallery that would showcase student work on a project, i.e., assemble thumbnails of student Glogs for an assignment on Battles of World War II, for example, so that everyone in the class — and beyond — can review and learn from the work.”

“We are starting a new early college high school program. The consensus was it was a great way to publicize our new endeavor. I think this is a great way to publicize new programs. It was easy to use.”

“... classroom ideas for Glogster use:

- * advertise a word or concept
- * illustrate an oral presentation
- * create a Glogster for an historic or current day pivotal/key person related to a time period, movement, development, etc.
- * back to school ‘introduce yourself’ project”

Vuvox

[Vuvox](#) allows users to mix text, pictures, sound, and video, to create a couple of different presentation formats – a scrolling ‘collage’ presentation, or their ‘express’ format. Learn more about Vuvox [here](#) (on their ‘About’ page).

“This could be used for digital storytelling, much like a storyboard. Any activity with a sequence or timeline could be built for history lessons (i.e. battles of the civil war, or science – phases of moon, rock cycle, water cycle). Really anything goes! It can almost work as a graphic organizer, it is so visually rich.”

“I can recommend Vuvox to the classroom teachers with whom I partner on instruction for a variety of projects, including portfolios of students work, timelines, country brochures,

properties of chemical elements, biographies, and reader response to literature. In the library, Vuvox could be a fun way to provide book recommendations by featuring books related to a theme (similar to what I've done with my summer reading collage) or new additions to the collection."

OneTrueMedia

"Make amazing videos by mixing your photos and video with our effects, text and music" with [OneTrueMedia](#). Learn more [here](#) (on their 'FAQ' page).

"With the 'old time' video effects, students could use this tool to create 'You Are There' style news reports about historical topics, using primary source images that they research and scripts that they write, record, and upload. Although the 30-second limit may seem like a drawback, it could actually force students to synthesize and condense information, thereby enhancing learning."

"This tool can be used to convert short writing assignments or projects into videos. For example, a science project on the layers of soil could include images of the three layers and a paragraph about each layer."

"I would like to use a program like this for an online yearbook. It may be a more affordable way to offer pictures from the year. Acceptable use would be an issue, but definitely something to think about. I might also use the program to have the students share information about themselves to help me get to know them better at the beginning of each new class."

Voki

With [Voki](#), you can create a speaking animated avatar! Learn more [here](#) (on their 'About' page.)

"I use Voki to personalize some of the web sites I create. For example, I have a Voki on my blog to send a greeting to students, and I have one on my resume/portfolio wiki to explain the site to potential employers/ collaborators. I have also used Voki as part of a sub plan; if I'm going to be out for the day, I use my avatar to send a message to students with goals for the day's class. [Could also] be used for reading instruction (record students reading aloud) and world language pronunciation exercises."

Prezi

[Prezi](#) is an app where you can create those cool visuals with images and text that zoom in to specific content elements and then back out again to see the bigger picture, and then zoom in again, etc. These have become popular in television commercials lately. Learn more [here](#) (by watching the video on their home page).

"... four other faculty members and myself were to present information to the faculty that we learned at a workshop. Everyone e-mailed me the outline of what they were talking about and I was able to create one seamless Prezi for us all to refer to. This was much better, in my opinion, than five different people hooking up to the projector and using different tools for visuals."

“Prezi could be used as a getting to know you tool. Students could write their first name and tell us about themselves and their family. There are numerous charts (timelines, flow charts, etc.) that could be utilized in the content areas as well.”

Access these EmergingEdTech.com posts to explore Presentation and Screencasting further:

[Making the Rudolph Music Video \(a Web 2.0 story\)](#)

[5 Reasons Why I Think Camtasia Rocks](#)

[8 Great Free Digital Presentation Tools For Teachers To Try ...](#)

[Free screencasting – easy; free video editing – not so much](#)

[Screencasting with Debut's Lite Version](#)

[Vuvox Rocks \(what a great tool for creating student reports and teacher presentations\)](#)

Chapter 11 - Surveys & Polls

Below I provide brief insights into 2 different free survey and poll taking tools. Polls and surveys can be beneficial in the classroom ... to gather instant feedback and get a sense of how material is getting across, or to select from choices like when to schedule an upcoming event, and so on.

Doodle – a quick, easy, and free resource for creating polls



Doodle.com allows you to send a link out to users where they can easily and quickly click and make a selection from a range of choices you lay out. I just used it to have users self-select from a range of training dates. It took about 10 minutes to set up, and produced a self managed process that required very little administrative effort. If I did this the way I used to – by sending out an email and then having people email me back first and second choices, and then setting these up in a worksheet and responding to users to let them know which dates worked and which didn't and so on, it could have taken hours to administer, versus very little time with Doodle. Very productive! A great way to take quick polls in the classroom. If this sounds useful, give it a shot – for the right application, it is spot-on.

SurveyMonkey

I am a big a fan of SurveyMonkey – I use it frequently to create top-notch web based surveys for free. I realized as I am writing this that I've never posted about this great tool! I've now added it to my list of future topics, but in the meanwhile, suffice it to day it's worth checking into.

This page provides their pricing plans – as you will see, their free basic plan provides for surveys with 10 questions and 100 responses per survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/pricing>.

Chapter 12 – Twitter in the Classroom

Over 100 Ways To Use Twitter In The Classroom

These resources actually provide over 110 ideas for, and examples of, using Twitter in the classroom.



I've come across a lot of articles containing examples and suggestions for using [Twitter](#) in instructional applications. I've combed through many of these and tried to boil down the redundancies to create a rich set of idea-laden resources. While there's still going to be some overlap in the concepts presented in these articles, they clearly meet the goal of providing a thorough set of ideas and examples for leveraging Twitter in the educational process. *(I follow this new listing with the original set of articles cited in my June '09 post).*

- Here we have [25 Ways to Teach with Twitter](#) from Sonja Cole.
- Here's [10 great ideas on how to use Twitter in the classroom](#), from blogger Steve Wheeler.
- This extensive list provides [50 ways to use Twitter in the College Classroom](#).
- This [Twitter for Academia](#) post suggests 13 different ways to use Twitter in the classroom.
- In this post, teacher "Fernando" offers his [Top 10 Uses of Twitter for Education](#).
- Lastly, [this PDF file](#) discusses the experience of teacher Ana Dominquez using Twitter in the Kindergarten classroom.

I also want to mention these [100 Serious Twitter Tips for Academics](#), which are worth reviewing to learn more and plan your approach to using Twitter in (and out of) the classroom.

Additionally, here 6 additional example that I published in a popular post in 2009:

- I'll start by providing links to two articles ([here is one](#), and [here is the another](#)), about teacher Monica Rankin using Twitter in instructional application at the University of Texas at Dallas. These are a few of many stories about Professor Rankin's efforts *(this highly covered case is what really triggered my perception that there were a lot of articles about Twitter in the classroom in recent weeks)*.
- [Here is a video](#) about Twitter (and other technologies) being used at Roosevelt HS in Minneapolis.

- [This article](#) from The Chronicle of Higher Education discusses instructor Cole Camplese's use of Twitter, streaming Tweets from students on screen during lectures, as part of the instructional process.
- [In this Vlog](#), Christine Morris explains how she experimented with the technology with her higher ed students, tapping into Tweetdeck to get the most out Twitter.
- [In this blog posting](#), David Silver explains how Twitter replaced three other technologies he was using in the classroom.
- Last, but certainly not least, [here is one of countless articles](#) about Professor David Parry's work with Twitter, from early 2008. This is the first Twitter in the classroom story that I came across and it has been discussed and posted about many times on the Internet.

Intro to Twitter

Just to round this posting out, for anyone who is new to Twitter, here's a nice introductory video on how to use Twitter (*a short ad may play before the video, but it's worth the wait – this is a nicely done 4 min. video from "Howcast"*): <http://www.howcast.com/videos/149055-How-To-Use-Twitter>

4 Great Twitter Applications for Teachers Using Twitter In The Classroom

Teachers are finding new ways to use Twitter to engage their students, build stronger academic and professional relationships, and to share information in a richer learning environment, and they are using tools like these to bring more fun and functionality to the process.



It's easy to get started with these applications. Users can sign up using their Twitter accounts (*although GroupTweet does get a little more involved*). Each of these tools has the benefit of being web based – you don't have download anything to your computer to use them, and you can access them from anywhere via a web browser. Lastly, they all have free versions that provide robust functionality.

Twitpic (twitpic.com)

Twitpic allows users to upload photos or videos and share them directly to Twitter, creating an array of possibilities for sharing information. You can get started in seconds, signing in with your Twitter credentials.

Teachers and educators can use Twitpic to post visual content related to classes or coursework, keep classroom pen pals connected, develop class projects that call for students to assemble photos with specific subjects or themes, and so on.

(Of course, it's always important to keep privacy considerations in mind when posting pictures of video materials ... sharing personal photos of other people without their consent is never recommended.)

Twtpoll (twtpoll.com)

Polling and survey tools provide teachers so many capabilities. Poll students about their thoughts on class materials and subjects, use a poll as a quiz, allow the poll itself to be an educational tool about voting and democracy, or reach out to colleagues and put new ideas through a peer-reviewed test phase before investing time and energy into implementing them in the classroom. The possibilities are endless.

The polls or surveys people create on Twtpoll can be shared with Twitter followers, Facebook friends or email contacts, giving the tool more dynamic reach than if it relied on Twitter responses alone. Twtpoll comes with four different pricing options – a free version with plenty of power, and three paid options that provide increasing functionality.

GroupTweet (grouptweet.com)

GroupTweet enables teachers to create a classroom Twitter group, where anyone who is authorized and has a Twitter account can contribute. This can be a great way to tie class related tweeting together and create a course-specific presence on Twitter.

Check out the [GroupTweet Examples Page](#) to get a sense of how the tool works and what it lets you do, or dig into the [FAQs](#) for further details. A GroupTweet classroom account can be focused specifically on students, or it could be used to help to keep the conversation and the lines of communication open between educators, students and parents. The tool is easy to set up and use, and can be kept private by allowing only members of the group to tweet and see tweets.

FollowerWonk (followerwonk.com)

FollowerWonk is the ultimate Twitter Follower data tool, allowing for analysis of Twitter users and follower trends. The free functionality in FollowWonk provides summary information for

any Twitter user's followers (*except for yourself – you have to pay for that*), and it lets you compare information about different Twitter users. There are a variety of paid plans that provide additional analytics capabilities.

Educators can collect all sorts of useful data from the Twitter analytics tool about what's trending among their peers in specific locations, across age or student groups, by topic or even by a “cloud” search of similar terms found in bios – like ‘teacher’ or ‘education.’

This is a powerful tool that allows teachers to compare what is being learned and what is being taught within the entire Twitter community, which had 200 million registered accounts as of January 2011!

All of these Twitter tools can enhance teachers and students ability to communicate and share ideas. Used together, they create a new, dynamic set of learning and information sharing tools.

Access these EmergingEdTech.com posts to explore Twitter further:

[More than a third of Higher Education Faculty are on Twitter](#)

[7 Twitter Users to Follow If You Are Interested in Education Technology](#)

Chapter 13 - Virtual Worlds: Second Life

The most popular Virtual World application is a free resource (*assuming you don't choose to trade some of your real money for the virtual "Linden Dollars" that serve as current in SL*).

Here's a few posts that focus on Second Life and other virtual worlds, and how they can play a role in education.

Using Second Life for Educational applications

When I first checked SL a number of years, the computer I was using was a few years old, and was not maxed out with RAM, and the performance of the environment was just too slow to use. This led me to think that this may have been one of the significant factors behind what seemed to me to be a lagging use of the environment. After all, SL has been around for years, and certainly seems cool and interesting, but of the people I knew using an array of Internet technologies, none were working with SL. This time, I was able to easily move around the environment, and it seemed that functionality was more than adequate to allow me to play around and see what the environment had to offer. [This page provides System Requirements specifications](#). It is certainly a widely used tool these days, as each time I logged on there were **over 50,000 other people logged on!**

Getting started

After creating an account and logging in, I proceeded to search for and 'teleport' to various worlds, which was easy to do. It was also pretty easy to move around and change my perspective. I even learned how to fly! By paying attention to the options available on the screen, and trying things out, the basic navigation issue was not terribly challenging. What struck me as more difficult was figuring out how to actually interact and do things. It took a couple hours of playing, and the help of this tutorial I found on YouTube (below) to get the hang of things. One of the difficulties I found with the environment was the lack of a consistent way to tell what a world has to offer. Some worlds (a.k.a. Islands) in SL provide a nice overview, usually on a billboard or sign of some sort, close to where you land when you 'transport' there, but not all do. It would seem very beneficial to me if there were some standard sort of mechanism, maybe linked to the map, that would make it real easy to know what's available in a given SL world, and make it easy to teleport there (the map tool provides some functionality like this, but it seems a bit short in terms of completeness of functionality and ease of use). *[If I'm just missing something here, please comment and point it out! – KW]*.

Touring a Virtual College Campus

As one example of my wanderings and attempts to work with SL, I traveled to Bryant & Stratton's virtual Campus (*which I found by searching for 'colleges' in the search box in the upper right hand corner of the SL screen*).

After transporting to the virtual campus, I saw a “Welcome To Our Virtual Campus” sign that pointed out 7 different facilities on the campus. I walked over to the Open House building, where I immediately saw a large board labeled “2009 Online Commencement”, with a ‘Start’ button, but I could not get it to do anything (*even though I followed the instruction to select the ‘Touch’ option from the right-click menu*). This was kind of typical of some of the frustrating experiences I had as I came across objects in SL that looked like they were going to do something, but often didn’t. It turned out that this object signified a live event that had already happened, and there were some arrows near the board that would allow you to scroll through listing of awarded degrees. The only reason I discovered that was because an avatar approached me and initiated a chat, and this was when SL finally felt like it was coming to life for me. Once I realized where and how to chat interactively, this gentleman (*Scott Traylor, Director of Admissions at B&S, who exists in SL as ‘Traylorman Lane’*) was very helpful and provided some insight into how Bryant & Stratton is using SL to engage prospects with online open houses and virtual tours, and to give existing students across their 15 campuses a chance to interact in a different way.

I spent a little more time strolling around the virtual campus and saw useful information services like kiosks (*these typically led to external web pages*), and places to apply online or request a brochure.

Other SL resources for Education

I was particularly interested in checking out museums and other types of online resources in SL that can be useful to educators. I poked around a little and visited some sites. Being able to see images of paintings or other purely visual media is a certainly a straightforward application of the toolset. Another interesting construct was this rich technology timeline mural (*image below*), found at the New Venture Hall at The Tech Virtual museum. There is a statement on this mural that says “This mural is an invitation to dialogue about the vision of Dr. Douglas C. Engelbart ...”, but it was not obvious to me how to participate in that dialogue (or even if it was possible to do so). The mural itself contained a great deal of information, and seemed to have been contributed to in some sort of interactive fashion.



Other observations

- I spent far more time working to learn about SL than I care to admit - 2 or 3 time more than it takes to learn most of the other Internet tools that I blog about. There is a pretty significant user ramp-up effort required to learn how to use the tool, and you need decent bandwidth and a PC with some power, to have a smooth experience. Simply put, SL isn't an environment where the casually interested can just stop by and try it out – it requires more of an investment in time than many other Internet tools.
- Second Life certainly has some useful and intriguing functionality to offer, such as getting an introduction to a place you haven't visited, learning more about what that real-world location has to offer, tapping into an array of resources about a topic in a fun and different manner, and attending live events and performances. It also serves as a virtual meeting place, with sophisticated and unique functionality (*but it does require a good deal more effort to use than other remote technologies, like conference calls, web meetings, forums and chat rooms, etc.*).
- The most advanced means of interaction, and the best way get the most out of SL, is to interact with other users by chatting, IM'ing, or talking directly. Of course, there are also imbedded mechanisms and online interactions, such as web links, video and audio casts, scheduled events, and the occasional more creative interactive object. If one gets into building and/or transacting business in SL, that's a bigger effort, and gets much more involved/interactive.
- One of the most impressive aspects of SL is the thoroughness of many of the built out worlds. There are many tours of existing places, such as the entire city of Amsterdam (although this isn't a particularly wholesome place for student-aged young people). You really can get some sense of what a place is actually like. One caveat of navigating a large area can be waiting for sections of the world you are in to render while you fly or walk around – this can make it difficult to see what's around you without going in a given direction to get it to build out.

10 Examples of Useful Second Life Resources for Educators

The following listing of Second Life islands is intended to provide some insight into resources within SL that have potential usefulness as an engaging part of an instructor's lecture, a student project, or a more extended classroom effort. The arts and sciences include many disciplines that can go hand in hand with SL's ability to display images and provide 'virtual tour' functionality, and these types of sites dominate the list. SL's ability to echo many real world interactions opens the door to emulate many kinds of constructs and processes, such as conducting business, or doing architectural design, but these types of activities require a much larger investment of time and effort than simply taking virtual tours. Below I have focused on experiences that require little more than a "walk around and check things out" level of activity engagement in order to be somewhat engaging.

For some of these sites, I have included a Second Life URL, for some I have included a link to an associated web site, and for others I have included a simple search phrase for locating the site in SL's Search window [note that accessing an SL URL requires that you have a SL account]. I also should mention that all SL sites also have 3 digit mapping coordinates, but that's rather advanced for lay users such as myself, and I will not indicate them here.

Art Galleries of SL ([web site](#)): This site lists over 600 SL based art galleries, and provides SL URLs for most of them, plus links to associated web sites when available. Many of the galleries are ranked (on a scale of 1 to 5 stars). I checked out a few of the 5 star sites, and there were many nice paintings and sculptures displayed (*there may also be erotic works in these sites, so keep that in mind before sending students there*). Many of the pieces in museums are for sale (they can be bought with '[Linden Dollars](#)' and hung up in your own SL property if you acquire some).

Star Trek Museum of Science: This was one of the easiest sites I came across to get easy 'response' from – that is, many of the wall hangings and objects have some sort of easily accessible functionality (*mostly 'notecards' with information*), that just walking around and checking things out was rather enjoyable. Moreover, the site goes somewhat beyond Star Trek and “promotes the study of the scientific and engineering technologies found in Star Trek” to “encourage interest in the real-life physics, astronomy, information technology and other sciences that are the foundation of those technologies”.

International Spaceflight Museum ([web site](#)): Features virtual models of various spacecraft, and links to wiki pages that provide an overview of the crafts and their missions, in a multitude of languages.

Music: Blue Fusion Jazz Club ([web site](#)): This site features live performances, and it seemed like it should be a pretty cool island, but I was unable to get much interaction out of it. Even though I saw people dancing in one area, I couldn't get the system to play any music for me. There was also supposed to be a YouTube video available on a screen here, but it wouldn't play either. Not sure what I was doing wrong, but I am guessing that these limitations were operator error and not necessarily functions that didn't work.

The Museum of Robots ([web site](#)): As per the notecard that is offered to you as soon as you transport to this island, “The Museum of Robots is dedicated to the appreciation of robots. Its mission is to promote understanding of the place of robots in popular culture, art, and science. We realize this mission through permanent and special exhibits, entertainment, and events.” Have a look around if robots interest you!

The Museum of Philosophy (*As of late Jan 2012, this site appears to no longer be available*).

The Newggenheim Museum (*search for 'newggenheim' in SL*): A fully interactive re-working of the original Guggenheim Museum.

Mental Health ([SL URL](#)): The virtual hallucinations project seeks to educate people about the mental illness schizophrenia. This clinic building site is based on the hallucinations of two specific people with schizophrenia, who were interviewed in detail and gave feedback on early designs for the hallucinations. While the hallucinations are not glamorous, they fairly accurately reproduce these patients' experiences. You can get a sense of just how intrusive the voices of schizophrenia really are by visiting this site.

Genome Island (*search for 'genome' in SL*): This is a pretty interesting interactive world focused on Genetics, featuring exhibits such as a slideshow that explains the inheritance of the X-linked Orange gene in cats, and cat avatars you can click on to see the colors of their offspring, as a demonstration of gene sharing outcome possibilities. This site gets heavy with scientific jargon, and familiarity with Genetics is required to fully appreciate this Island.

The Most Beautiful Campus in SL" - DePaul University College of CDM (Computing & Digital Media) (*search for 'depaul' in SL*): While being rather different from the museums and art displays above, it just didn't seem like this listing would be complete without including at least one well done SL college or university Campus, and this one is a beauty. This Island is richly detailed and possible to appreciate for that quality alone. Stop by and have a look around!

Conclusions

Second Life has the potential to play a variety of interesting roles in the educational process and can provide a more interactive experience than the average web site or tool, but it requires more of an investment in time to learn and use than many other web based tools require. Educational institutions across the world are finding many interesting ways to leverage SL, and I could spend many more weeks learning about and reporting on Education related SL activities there. In fact, I have become interested enough in the tool to continue working with it on my own time, and I am looking forward to providing an update here in a few months, after I have given the environment more of a workout. I feel I have yet to fully grasp the various mechanics of using the environment, and that there is more of interest awaiting me as I take the time to explore further.

Longer term, it could be quite interesting seeing how this immersive toolset evolves over time and how Second Life and other Virtual World technologies are adopted by education in years to come. As the speed of processors, bandwidth, and other relevant resources continues to evolve, the potential utility of this type of complex tool could be very impressive. Better integration of video, more interactive objects, characters with artificial intelligence (and quicker rendering of the landscape) could turn what is already an intriguing environment into an Internet experience with little comparison.

Access these EmergingEdTech.com posts to explore Virtual Worlds further:

[The future of 3D Technology](#)

[Three great YouTube videos about Educational uses of Second Life](#)

[Google's Liquid Galaxy Project – too cool not to share](#)

[Cool insight into the future of virtual worlds & virtual reality](#)

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